



Stones and Iraqis find weapons cache

Story and photos by Spc. Curtis Squires
MNC-I PAO

With dawn fast approaching, Estonian and Iraqi Army Soldiers prepare to move out. The combined forces are going to patrol the countryside about 10 miles south of Camp Taji, Iraq.

The convoy, consisting of two Coalition military vehicles and two Iraqi tanks, set out for what would be a seven-hour patrol consisting of three farms being searched, and a small weapons cache being discovered, Friday.

The early-morning sun was

pushing away the evening chill as Estonian Platoon 12, the Stones, and a squad from the 2nd Iraqi Armor Division approached the first farm.

While the local IA company commander questioned the farm owner, the Stones began searching the surrounding area for weapons, ammunition and ordnance.

The Stones were searching the ground with a metal detector, said Estonian Capt. Marqus Kuul, platoon leader, ESTPLT 12, and graduate of the United States Marine Corps Officer Candidate School.

"Unfortunately, the ground is often covered with trash and junk, but we have to search through it any-

way," said Pvt. Aivar Rohtmaa, infantryman, ESTPLT 12.

The Stones and IA searched the farm and turned up nothing,

On the surface, the hole appeared to be filled with trash and junk, said Rohtmaa. But as the Soldiers searched deeper, three 122mm artillery shells became visible.

After the shells were found, it was obvious the hole had to be dug out to see what else could be found, said Kuul.

An IA and Estonian Soldier

were alternating digging the hole, but as it got deeper more explosives and rounds were found.

The search of the hole, and surrounding property resulted in three 122mm artillery

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An Iraqi Army Soldier digs out a hole during a patrol about 10 miles outside of Camp Taji, Iraq. Three 122mm Artillery rounds, anti-aircraft rounds and several pounds of un-exploded ordnance were found in the hole.



Estonian Pvt. Aivar Rohtmaa, infantryman, Estonian Platoon 12, looks on while Iraqi Army Soldiers dismount and prepare to search a farm, Friday. The search resulted in a small cache being found.

so the joint mission moves onto the next objective, said Kuul.

As soon as the platoon walked onto the next area to be searched, an IA and Stone Soldier paid particular attention to one hole in the ground, continued Kuul.

Camp Victory Three-day forecast

Sunday



Partly Cloudy
High: 82 F
Low: 59 F

Monday



Partly Sunny
High: 76 F
Low: 54 F

Tuesday



Sunny
High: 77 F
Low: 54 F

In today's Victory Times:

Page 2: Chaplain's
Corner, letters
from home

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not tolerate
discrimination

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operating hours

Chaplain's Corner

The Mount Olive Pickle Jar



Chaplain (Maj.)
Charles M. Herring

"The best and most beautiful things cannot be seen or touched – they must be felt with the heart." **Helen Keller**

The Mount Olive Pickle Jar sat on the floor beside the pine dresser since Malco was a small boy. Each evening when his father got ready for bed, he emptied his pockets and tossed his coins into the pickle jar. As a small boy Malco was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar.

The coins landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled. Malco would squat on the floor in front of the jar and admire the copper and silver circles that glinted like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window.

When the jar was filled Malco and his father would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank. Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small Tampa Nugget Cigar box, the coins were placed between Malco and his father on the seat of his old 1952 Ford pickup truck and they would ride leisurely into town.

Each and every time, as they drove to the bank, Malco's dad would look at him hopefully. "These coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back." Again, each and every time, he would smile with a big grin as he slid the cigar box across the marbled counter to the bank teller and would announce proudly, "These are for my son's college fund. He will never work at the mill all his life like me."

Leaving the small mill town bank they would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. Malco always got chocolate. His dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show Malco the few coins nestled in his calloused palm. "When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again."

Malco always had the honor of dropping the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, Malco and his father grinned at each other. "You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters," the father said. "But you'll get there. I'll see to that."

The years passed, and Malco finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting his parents, he used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the Mount Olive pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed. A lump rose in Malco's throat as he stared at the spot beside the

pine dresser where the jar had always stood. Malco's father was a man of few words, and never lectured him on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The pickle jar had taught him all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have done.

When Malco married, he told his wife about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in his life as a boy. In his mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much his father had loved him.

No matter how rough things got at home, his dad continued to drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when he was laid off from the mill and Malco's mom served dried pinto beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar. To the contrary, as his Dad looked across the table at his young son, pouring catsup over his beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for his son. "When you finish college, Son," he told him, his eyes glistening, "You'll never have to eat beans again. . . unless you want to."

The first Christmas after Malco's daughter was born, they spent the holiday with his parents. After dinner, the grandparents sat next to each other on the worn sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. The baby began to cry softly and Malco's wife took her from the proud grandpa and said, "She probably needs to be changed," and carried her into the grandparents' bedroom to diaper her. When she came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes.

She handed the baby back to the grandparents before taking Malco's hand and leading him into the room. "Look," she said softly, her eyes directing him to a spot on the floor beside the faded dresser. To Malco's amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old Mount Olive pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins.

Malco walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into his pocket and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking him, he dropped the coins into the jar. Looking up he saw that his father, carrying the baby, had slipped quietly into the room. Their eyes locked, and both knew they were feeling the same emotions. Neither of them could speak.

Sometimes as armed forces personnel we are so busy adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or for worse.

In my faith, God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others.

Happy moments, praise God. Difficult moments, seek God. Quiet moments, worship God. Painful moments, trust God. Every moment, thank God.

Letters from home

Birdman, my precious son Sgt. Glenn E. Stewart III, V Corps Artillery, my nephew, Sgt. S.T. Heath IV, 101st Airborne Division, and all the other sons and daughters who are bravely serving, you are in my thoughts and prayers for a successful mission and a safe return. America supports you, for without you, America would cease to exist.

With all the love in my heart,

Mummsy

BEAT THE EXPERT

MARCH MADNESS

Guest picker: 3/3



Staff Sgt. Jason Baker
production chief/ MNC-I PAO

Texas
UCLA
Washington
Wichita State

2006 NCAA TOURNAMENT ROUND 2 TIP-OFF

Vs.

(2) Texas vs. (10) N.C. State
(2) UCLA vs. (10) Alabama
(4) Illinois vs. (5) Washington
(2) Tennessee vs. (7) Wichita State

Expert: 3/3



Spc. Brian J. Anderson
editor/ MNC-I PAO

N.C. State
Alabama
Illinois
Tennessee

Sgt. Maj. Paul Stevenson proved to be a worthy opponent during round 1. There was a number of upsets, and predicting them almost seemed impossible; however, the experts full round 1 bracket only suffered 6 losses. Round 2's guest picker is Staff Sgt. Jason Baker, production chief, public affairs office, Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

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ESTONIA

shells, a handful of anti-aircraft rounds, and roughly 10 pounds of unexploded ordnance, "macaroni charges," being discovered, said Kuul.

"Macaroni charges," are explosive sticks that look similar to long pieces of macaroni that can slide inside artillery shells to make a bigger explosion, said Kuul.

The search also netted four vintage rifles, three Iraq license plates and an infrared light designed for an up-armored tank. The "macaroni charges" were disposed of at the site; however, the rest were transported to Camp Taji to be properly destroyed later, added Kuul.

Acting on the new information of the discovered cache, Kuul and the local IA company commander decided to search the three houses surrounding the farm where the ordnance was discovered.

The IA Soldiers originally gave a quick glance through the

house, then the Stone Soldiers conducted a more extensive search of the houses, said Rohtmaa.

"Although we didn't find anything in the houses, it was a good training experience for the Iraqis," Kuul added. "They got to witness how to properly search a house or building thoroughly."

Even though the cache was small, the mission was still a huge success, said Kuul. The explosives that were unearthed, were those the insurgents are using to make improvised explosive devices and suicide vehicle-borne IEDs; hopefully this will help save someone's life in the future.

"Although Estonia is a small country west of Russia, we are here to do our part to help make the world a better place," said Sgt. 1st Class Marek Kohv, squad leader, ESTPLT 12.

The Stone platoon is based out of Camp Taji, but rotates its platoon members to Fort Concho where they fall under the command of the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Graduates will not tolerate discrimination

Story by Spc. James P. Hunter

MNC-I PAO

Twenty-three U.S. Army Soldiers graduated the Equal Opportunity Representative Course Today.

Every Army company and battalion is required to have an equal opportunity representative, said Sgt. 1st Class Chris Balduf, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Equal Opportunity Office.

EO representatives are the eyes and ears of the company and battalion commanders, said Balduf. The program is designed to train the Soldiers to create an equal opportunity environment.

They need to be fully aware of equal opportunity, he added, so they can promote it, strengthen unit commanders EO policy and deal with mission distracters.

During the week-long course, the Soldiers learned how to identify and help eliminate sexual harassment, discrimination, racism and extremism, said Balduf.

Balduf said first the Soldiers had to look at their values and attitude.

During an exercise called "lifeboat," the instructors split the class into two groups and told them they were in a boat, lost at sea. They had to lose three people from the boat in order to survive.

Some Soldiers were eager to jump, he said. Others though, pleaded they were a necessity to them surviving. One Soldier said he was an Eagle Scout and if they were stranded for days, they would need him for his survival skills.

Balduf said the exercise was good to see

where the Soldiers values stood.

The students also learned about the various religions and cultures in today's world, said Staff Sgt. Eric Mattson, EOR, 553rd Corps Support Battalion. This gives them an understanding of where people come from and the history they may carry with them.

Each student had to prepare and conduct a 15-minute presentation on a specific culture.

The class prepares Soldiers to solve complaints at an informal level, said Balduf.

"The Army's ideal situation is to solve everything at a lower level," he added. "It gives the unit an opportunity to solve things at the lowest level possible."

EO representatives are critical members of the team, especially when the Army is at war, said Balduf. They deal with the problems which distract from the combat mission.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Drew Hendricks

Staff Sgt. Mary J. Johnson, 29th Signal Brigade, accepts her certificate for graduating the week long Equal Opportunity Course here, March 18.

Balduf said problems do exist in theater and the Army cannot afford for someone to become distracted. These distracters often inflate when they are not dealt with and become bigger problems; ultimately, taking Soldiers' focus away from their mission.

He said one of the biggest problems the Army faces is sexual harassment.

"(Sexual harassment) is something people deny exist," Balduf said, "but when you talk with Soldiers you hear 'yes I have witnessed it,' or 'it does happen.'"

Balduf said there still is a certain attitude in the Army that reinforces the idea for Soldiers to suck it up and drive on.

"The leadership is pushing to call sexual harassment what it is and deal with the matter," he added.

To avoid such situations, Soldiers need to communicate with one another and get to know each other as human beings who show love, fear and emotion, said Balduf.

As for equal opportunity representatives, they need to be someone a Soldier can trust, approach and feel comfortable around to talk about these matters, he added.

Mattson hopes he will be able help out his commander to ensure the EO policy is enforced and Soldiers have the information they need to know about different distracters.

He said EO is a very important mission the Army is involved in.

"The Army has (EO) for a reason," Mattson said. "Don't take EO lightly."

Every Soldier needs to be on the same page, he added, and be held accountable for their actions.

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Post Deployment Health Briefings:

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Saturday & Sunday 7:30 a.m. - noon

Legal Assistance/Claims

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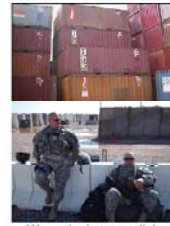
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TIME: 8 p.m. **PLACE:** MWR Bldg. 124

TOURNAMENT DATES:

March 27

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For more information contact Sgt. 1st Class Chris Baldur, DSN 822-3545

Worship Opportunities

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Sunday:

Traditional Protestant Service 7 and 8:45 a.m.
Roman Catholic Confession 10 a.m.
Roman Catholic Mass 10:30 a.m.
Gospel Protestant Service noon
Latter Day Saints Service 2 p.m.
Episcopal/Lutheran Service 4 p.m.
Contemporary Protestant Service 6 p.m.

Saturday:

7th Day Adventist Service 11 a.m.
Roman Catholic Mass 8 p.m.

Mini-Chapel (Bldg. 2)

Monday - Friday

Roman Catholic Service 4 p.m.

Friday:

Jewish Service 6:30 p.m.

Saturday:

Orthodox:

Orthodox Vespers 5 p.m.
Orthodox Confession 6:30 p.m.
Orthodox Bible Study 7 p.m.

Sunday:

Orthodox Divine Liturgy 9 p.m.

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Ensure to include Soldiers name, rank, and unit.

Victory Times welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from our readers. Send submissions or comments to brian.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil.

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